6:Antropova E-4 (no date) 1964 RY3 Kamchadal RY3

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Village, 18th-century engraving.

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At the time of the first Russian acquaintance with Kamchatka the Itel'mens maintained a primitive-communal order. "Until its subjection to Russian rule," wrote Krasheninnikov, "this wild people lived in a state of complete freedom; it had no masters, was subjected to no laws, and paid tribute to no one. Old and courageous people had superior position [554] in every ostrozhka, but this meant only that their advice was hearkened to. Generally, there was equality among them, no one could issue commands to anyone else, and no one had the right to mete out punishment on his own [614] to anyone." Every village was inhabited by members of one clan. The semidugout housed several related families; the number of its inhabitants [342] sometimes was as high as 100. They were bound by collective production [592] and consumption. The custom of vendetta prevailed.

The woman held a high position in family and social life. Many features of matriarchy persisted in the Itel'men social system. These included the [562] husband's moving into the wife's home, or at least temporary residence [591] in the father-in-law's house; marriage by working for the bride, which [583] involved the groom's moving to her home and performing various tasks. But the matriarchal organization was already in a state of disintegration [182] in the beginning of the 18th century. Constant wars among individual clans [721] and with neighboring peoples, waged for the sake of seizing women and captives, who were partially turned into slaves, intensified this process. The arrival of Russians in Kamchatka led to rapid changes in the economy [648] and life of the Itel'mens.

The religious notions of the Itel'mens, according to 18th-century ex- [671] plorers, and primarily Krasheninnikov, had many elements in common with the beliefs of the Koryaks and Chukchi. These included the idea of the [796] raven-creator, rituals and celebrations connected with the annual economic cycle, whale, bear and other ceremonials, consisting of "treating" and "giving gifts" to the animals killed in the hunt. The most important of these was the fall festival, ending in "purification"—passing through hoops of birch twigs. The Itel'mens believed in evil mountain and forest